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After carefully side-stepping the issue since his election to Congress, Rep. John Krebs, D-Fresno, announced today he is opposed to the development of the Mineral King Valley.

The freshman legislator said after considering the matter "in depth" he concluded that development plans, as outlined in the final environmental impact statement (EIS), would not be in the best interests of the residents of the 17th Congressional District.

Krebs said the impact on residents of Tulare County, especially those in the Three Rivers area, would be particularly severe.

"Clearly, the environmental toll which would be exacted as a result of the proposed development would far outweigh the short-term economic benefits it might bring to the County of Tulare," Krebs said.

In the same statement released from his Washington, D.C., office, the freshman Democrat announced plans to introduce legislation to incorporate Mineral King into Sequoia National Park.

Citing a desire to balance the recreational needs of Californians with environmental concerns, Krebs said he would seek "maximum public input" to determine how the alpine valley should be used once it becomes part of the national park system. He said he would introduce legislation to this end within 30 days.

In announcing his proposed legislation, Krebs said he was interested in allowing in Mineral King recreational facilities in line with other national parks. That feature was not included in an earlier bill by Rep. George Miller, D-Pleasant Hill, which would have placed Mineral King in the national park system. There has been no Congressional action on Miller's bill.

Krebs said his final decision on the Mineral King development was delayed by his insistence on reviewing the draft and final environmental impact statements which were prepared by the United States Forest Service. The final report was released 2½ weeks ago.

In opposing the year-around recreation complex proposed by Walt Disney Productions, Krebs cited four key considerations.

First, he said the extensive commercial facilities which would be constructed would result in "irreversible disfigurement" of the valley. He also cited the severe physical impact which would be inflicted on the approaches to Mineral King because of "inevitable commercialization."

Secondly, Krebs said the projected increases in the number of visitors — most of them coming in automobiles —

would have a negative impact on the San Joaquin Valley's air quality.

The freshman Democrat said such a development would clearly not be in the best interests of agriculture — an industry Krebs pointed to as the backbone of the Valley's economy.

Krebs said there is already "substantial evidence" that decreased cotton yields have resulted from increased air pollution. Coupling this fact with the proven adverse effects of air pollutants on conifers, Krebs said he could not help but conclude that other crops — citrus for example — would "ultimately be seriously affected by further deteriorations in the level of air quality."

Thirdly, Krebs cited the projected cost of improving the access road recommended in the final EIS and the question over who would build it.

The Forest Service has estimated the road would cost between \$18 and \$21 million. But, Krebs said since construction could not possibly begin before 1979 the price tag more realistically would be between \$23 and \$27 million. He added the latter figures might be "unrealistically low" since longer delays might result from the expected court battle between the Sierra Club and the U.S. Forest Service over the development.

Krebs said an even more significant factor is the stated refusal of the Walt Disney firm to pay for the access road. He said the State of California is "certainly in no position" to handle the improvement and added it would be unfair to burden local taxpayers, especially since the majority of visitors to Mineral King have been projected to be Southern Californians.

Finally, Krebs said, the price structure which would be needed to cover the proposed development would effectively prevent many persons from enjoying the area.

Krebs' position on Mineral King was termed "a disappointment" this morning by John Leasure, a supervisor for the U.S. Forest Service in Porterville.

Leasure said the points of concern raised by the Congressman were addressed in the final EIS and he urged all interested persons to review the report "and draw their own conclusions about the impact."

Responding to Krebs' proposed legislation, Leasure said he feels the central question is not which agency should administer Mineral King, but what kind of land use policy should be employed there.

He declined to comment on the bill until it is introduced. Leasure said he recognizes that there will be strong legislative support for Krebs' bill, but he added the forest service also has received support for its position.

2023.006.0261